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SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: NATO ENVOY ON AFGHANISTAN TRANSIT  
AGREEMENT NEGOTIATIONS, COOPERATION

REF: A. TASHKENT 482

[1](#)B. DAO IIR 6 939 0113 08

[1](#)C. ASHGABAT 1254

Classified By: Poloff Steven Prohaska for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On September 26, NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General Robert Simmons briefed a gathering of NATO Embassy officials on his recent meetings with Government of Uzbekistan (GOU) officials on NATO-Uzbekistan cooperation, including ongoing transit agreement discussions. Simmons said that Russia is not trying to block the shipment of goods in support of Coalition operations in Afghanistan. Uzbekistan has also become increasingly active in its cooperation with NATO. Despite several problems with the GOU's recent draft transit agreement proposal, Simmons was pleased with the progress that has been achieved so far. The NATO agreement--which could be completed as early as the end of this year--will cover only rail transit. Coordination with NATO on this issue will clarify potential problems for U.S. efforts at the bilateral level to open new lines of communication (LOC) into Afghanistan, and could yield valuable lessons for negotiations with the Uzbeks. End summary.

Russia Not Blocking Cargo Transit  
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[1](#)2. (C) On September 26, NATO's Deputy Assistant Secretary General and Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia Robert Simmons gave a readout to NATO Embassies in Tashkent of his recent meetings with Government of Uzbekistan (GOU) officials. Simmons remarked that the two main goals of his meetings were to maintain cooperation with Uzbekistan and to reach agreement on the issue of transporting goods through Uzbekistan in support of

operations in Afghanistan. The current draft agreement, with NATO as a controlling authority, would apply to NATO, NATO allies, and non-NATO contributors supporting ISAF. Despite differences with Russia over the Russia-Georgia conflict, he believed that Russia would not try to block the transit of cargo in support of these operations, and noted that Russian Ambassador to NATO Rogozin had encouraged other members of the CIS to continue transit-related cooperation.

#### Uzbekistan Actively Participating in NATO Activities

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13. (C) Simmons discussed NATO's role in Afghanistan and the transit agreement with GOU officials including Foreign Minister Norov, Deputy Foreign Minister Nematov, Defense Minister Berdiyev, Parliamentary Chairman Safaev, and staff of the Ministry of Emergency Situations. Uzbekistan is satisfied with the range of activity it has with NATO, and its participation in various projects is increasing. Simmons noted that a NATO team will come to Uzbekistan next week to discuss an agreement on NATO assistance with the destruction of melange rocket fuel. (Note: The equipment will convert toxic melange rocket fuel into a low-grade fertilizer. End note.) He also hoped to get Uzbekistan more involved in civil emergency planning and said that a NATO-Uzbekistan dialogue on terrorism threat intelligence would be useful. Furthermore, Uzbekistan has been active in the Ambassadorial-level Central Asia-Afghanistan meetings under NATO auspices, which are intended to keep the Central Asian states apprised of--and involved with--the situation in

Afghanistan. The next such meeting is slated to take place on October 13. GOU-NATO efforts to build the Internet-based "Virtual Silk Highway" also are proceeding. Simmons said that GOU officials recognize ongoing difficulties in Afghanistan and want to support the West in ways that they can. Interestingly, National Security Council (NSC) Secretary Atayev was optimistic about the prospects for success there relative to some of his colleagues. The GOU still sees the Government of Afghanistan as weak, however.

#### Reticent on Russia-Georgia, Supportive of Cooperation with NATO, Russia

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14. (C) Parliamentary Foreign Relations Chairman Safayev had voiced his strong support for cooperation with NATO on transit. When Atayev told Simmons that Uzbekistan has no position on the Russia-Georgia situation and is still studying the issue, Simmons gave arguments against recognizing South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Simmons believed that the NSC still considers the issue of recognition of these provinces to be "an open issue." Atayev also had warned Simmons that if NATO-Russia relations deteriorate, this could affect Uzbekistan's relations with NATO. Simmons said that he had pushed back in response this statement. (Comment: Atayev's statement suggests that Uzbekistan is still trying to strike a balance between Russia and the West that avoids alienating either side. End comment.)

#### MFA Still Pushing "6 Plus 3," NSC Doesn't Care

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15. (C) Deputy Foreign Minister Nematov had again raised President Karimov's "6 Plus 3" proposal for Afghanistan. (Note: During the April 2-4 NATO/EAPC Summit in Bucharest, Karimov proposed establishing a United Nations-administered and coordinated "6 Plus 3" Contact Group--consisting of Afghanistan's neighbors, Russia, the U.S., and NATO, but not Afghanistan itself--to address the situation in Afghanistan. End note.) Simmons noted that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs always raises this issue with him, while the National Security Council never does. Not including Afghanistan in this mechanism remains a problem, Simmons said.

#### Problems with GOU Transit Draft not Insurmountable

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¶6. (C) The GOU responded to NATO with a draft transit agreement two weeks ago, Simmons continued. Unfortunately, this resembles the current Uzbekistan-Germany transit agreement. Because this format differs from what NATO is pursuing with Russia and Kazakhstan, the GOU's draft could result in some shipments of goods being blocked. There are four problems with the GOU's draft. First, and most importantly, Uzbekistan wants the agreement to make NATO liable for all shipments. NATO disagrees with this proposal on the grounds that it should not be held responsible for the actions of contractors. Second, Uzbekistan wants to reserve the right to stop any shipment of goods at the border if a dispute arises. Third, Uzbekistan had proposed coming to an agreement on a list of the goods that can be shipped, while NATO wants a list that identifies the goods that cannot be shipped. Uzbekistan appears to be warming to NATO's view on this issue, however. On a related note, the GOU wants combat troops to be listed as a banned item, while NATO believes precluding troop movements can be prevented within the

agreement without identifying them as a commodity. Fourth, Uzbekistan wants a "notification requirement" which would give it the right to take up to 30 days to approve any shipment of goods, but has pledged that it will try to decide on shipments in less time than this.

¶7. (C) Simmons said that overall, he was satisfied with the progress of negotiations with Uzbekistan on the transit agreement, and that the agreement can move forward if the aforementioned problems are resolved. The agreement with Uzbekistan must be a seamless web with the agreements with Russia and Kazakhstan, he said. Simmons was optimistic that the agreements could be in place by the end of the year.

#### NATO Hoping for Routes Through Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan -----

¶8. (C) Simmons noted that he has visited Turkmenistan three times and met President Berdimukhamedov. In discussions with him, the Government of Turkmenistan has been cautious on the transit agreement because of its policy of neutrality, but Simmons had countered that other neutral countries such as Sweden and Finland still have cooperated with NATO on certain projects. Simmons said that he was hoping to establish transit routes through both Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, but the option through Turkmenistan appeared less likely now (ref C).

#### Impressions of Berdiyev -----

¶9. (C) Simmons said that he had not met Defense Minister Berdiyev directly, though Berdiyev had been present during one of his meetings with GOU officials. Simmons observed that Berdiyev said nothing during the meeting, and opined that his reluctance to engage was due to his newness. Simmons found it reassuring that Deputy Defense Minister Niyazov had retained his position and had been seated at Berdiyev's right.

#### Comment: -----

¶10. (C) The NATO agreement--which could be completed as early as the end of this year--will cover only rail transit. It therefore appears the U.S. will still need a bilateral transit agreement to address road and air shipments, and possibly other issues as well (septel). Coordination with NATO on this issue is essential to clarify potential problems for U.S. efforts to establish a new LOC for Afghanistan, and could yield other lessons for negotiating with the GOU on this issue. Particularly in light of some of the possible difficulties with NATO transit through Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan may be poised to play a pivotal role in our efforts to support Coalition operations in Afghanistan.  
NORLAND